IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) An apparatus for detecting the presence of flaws in textile articles, especially socks, utilizable in correspondence of an ironing station in which, between a station for loading the articles on relevant support shapes and a station for unloading the same articles therefore, the articles are subjected to the action of ironing means, apparatus that comprises:

- at least a telecamera (9; 9') provided with an optical group (90) located at a preset position in order to frame an article (4) fitted on a shape (3) and disposed in stretched condition thereon;

- electronic checking means (92) able to detect a signal, emitted by said optical group (90), exceeding a predetermined threshold value and corresponding to a non-uniformity of reflection of light from said article (4) and/or of said shape (3);

- means (94), electrically associated with said checking means, which are disposed and acting within an article-unloading device (20) for conveying the articles towards either region (21) for unloading the articles which are of acceptable quality or a region (22) for discharging faulty articles, according to the result of said checking, that is, according to the nature (A, N) of a corresponding electrical signal generated by said means (92) as a consequence of said checking.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein it comprises:

- electronic means (91) to convert each image taken by said optical group (90) into a digital format and to form a corresponding digital image which corresponds to an array of pixels of substantially uniform color or luminosity related to the conformation or structure of the article's fabric or the shape supporting it;

- electronic means (92) in order to check whether the color or luminosity and/or relative position of the pixels of said image will correspond or not to the color or luminosity and/or relative position of the pixels of one or more digital sample images stored in the electronic memory (93) and corresponding to the images either of sound and well conformed articles, or of faulty ones;

- means (94), electronically associated with said checking means, which means are disposed and acting within an article-unloading device (20) in order to convey the articles either to the region (21) for the unloading of those having acceptable quality or to the region 22 for the discharge of the faulty ones, in relation to the outcome of said check, that is, to the nature (A, N) of a corresponding electrical signal generated by said means (92, 93) as a consequence of their checking action.

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1~~ or 2~~, wherein said apparatus (9; 9') is disposed downstream of said ironing means.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1~~ or 2~~, wherein it comprises two telecameras (9, 9') disposed facing each other, that is, in such a way as to be able to frame two sides of said shapes (3) at the same time.

5. (Original) A method for detecting the presence of flaws in textile articles, especially socks, utilizable in correspondence of an ironing station in which, between a station for loading the articles on relevant support shapes and a station for unloading the same articles therefrom, the articles are subjected to the action of ironing means, method that comprises the following operating steps:

- framing an article (4), fitted onto a shape (3), by means of an optical group (90) of a telecamera (9) located at a predetermined site;

- checking whether the color or luminosity of the acquired image will correspond or not to a preset threshold value related to the capacity of said article (4) and/or said shape (3) of reflecting the light;

- conveying the articles towards either a region (21) for unloading the articles which are of acceptable quality, or a region (22) for discharging faulty articles, according to the result of said checking, that is, according to the nature (A, N) of a corresponding electrical signal generated by said means (92) upon said checking.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein it comprises the following operating steps:

- conveying each image taken by the telecamera's optical group (90) into a digital format and forming a digital image corresponding to an array of pixels of a substantially uniform color or luminosity in relation to the conformation or structure of the article (4) and/or the material of the shape (3);

- checking whether the color or luminosity of said images will correspond to the color and luminosity of the pixels of one or more digital sample images stored in the electronic memory (93) and corresponding to the images either of sound and well conformed articles or of faulty ones;

- conveying the articles either to the region (21) for the unloading of those having acceptable quality or to the region (22) for the discharge of the faulty ones, in relation to the outcome of said check, that is, to the nature (A, N) of a corresponding electrical signal generated by said means (92, 93) as a consequence of their checking action.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claims~~ claim 5~~ or 6~~, wherein said telecamera (9) is located downstream of the ironing means so as to frame the article (4) as it is fitted and stretched on the corresponding shape (3).

8. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claims~~ claim 5~~ or 6~~, wherein are used two telecamerae for said framing step.

9. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said apparatus (9; 9') is disposed downstream of said ironing means.

10. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein it comprises two telecameras (9, 9') disposed facing each other, that is, in such a way as to be able to frame two sides of said shapes (3) at the same time.

11. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein said telecamera (9) is located downstream of the ironing means so as to frame the article (4) as it is fitted and stretched on the corresponding shape (3).

12. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein are used two telecamerae for said framing step.